

we remember the millions of selfless Americans whose wartime service helped preserve our freedom and the values we hold dear; and it is fitting that we should do so. But we must also remember that not all of the sacrifices that sustained us were made on the battlefield.

Long after the devastation of war ceases, the destruction left in its wake continues to afflict those who survive. For America's Gold Star Mothers—who have lost a child in the service of our country—the grief is particularly acute. The sons and daughters they cherished through the years, whom they guided and comforted through all the joys and heartaches of childhood and adolescence, were torn from their lives forever with cruel and sudden force. These mothers must live the rest of their lives knowing that the talents and ambitions of their children will never be fulfilled, that each family gathering or celebration will be shadowed by the absence of a dearly loved son or daughter.

Yet despite the enormity of their loss, America's Gold Star Mothers have continued to do what comes naturally to mothers: to comfort, to nurture, to give of themselves for the benefit of others. Through their devotion to our disabled veterans and their families, their generous community service, and their dedication to preserving the memory of the fallen, Gold Star Mothers remind us in so many poignant ways that true love of country often calls for both service and sacrifice.

For these reasons and more, and in recognition of the special burden that Gold Star Mothers bear on behalf of all of us, we set aside this day each year to honor and thank them and to rededicate ourselves to creating a world in which the kind of sacrifice they have been called upon to make need never be repeated. The Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 115 of June 23, 1936 (49 Stat. 1895), has designated the last Sunday in September as "Gold Star Mother's Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this day.

**Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,** President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Sunday, September 28, 1997, as Gold Star Mothers's Day. I call upon all government officials to display the United

States flag on government buildings on this solemn day. I encourage the American people also to display the flag and to hold appropriate meetings in their homes, places of worship, or other suitable places as a public expression of the sympathy and respect that our Nation holds for our Gold Star Mothers.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

**William J. Clinton**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:59 a.m., September 29, 1997]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on September 30.

### **Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Future Free Trade Area Negotiations**

*September 25, 1997*

*Dear Mr. Chairman:*

In accordance with section 108(b)(4) of the North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (19 U.S.C. 3317(b)(4)), I transmit herewith the report containing recommendations on future free trade area negotiations.

Sincerely,

**William J. Clinton**

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Bill Archer, chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means, and William V. Roth, Jr., chairman, Senate Finance Committee.

### **Interview With Tom Joyner, Tavis Smiley, and Sybil Wilkes on the Tom Joyner Morning Show in Little Rock**

*September 26, 1997*

**Q.** Mr. President, good morning.

**The President.** Good morning. You're having a lot of fun there for this early in the morning. [Laughter]

**Q.** And you're having a lot of fun, too, aren't you? Now that Chelsea is gone you all are having some fun. [Laughter]

**The President.** That's what Hillary says.

***Desegregation of Central High School***

**Q.** Mr. President, when this happened 40 years ago, how old were you?

**The President.** Eleven.

**Q.** And what was going through your mind when you saw all this, what happened here in Little Rock?

**The President.** I thought it was a bad thing. I didn't understand why people were so upset. But as I said yesterday, most of the white kids didn't think about it one way or the other until it actually happened. Until the Little Rock Nine were turned away, I think most people didn't think about it one way or the other. Children are basically self-absorbed in their own lives. It's part of the privilege of childhood.

But then, all of a sudden, kids that had never thought about it before, it's all they talked about for weeks. And everybody then had to decide really how they felt about it. And it seemed obvious to me that sooner or later this was going to have to be done; it might as well be done soon.

But I also—I was always amazed at how there was an element in the South and probably in the rest of the country, too, of people that were—they always just needed somebody to hate, needed somebody to look down on. But it's no way to run a country and no way to run a life. Sooner or later, to me, it was obvious it had to change.

**Q.** Mr. President, there seems to be so much symbolism to the fact that you were opening the door yesterday for the members of the Little Rock Nine coming through, as well as this year that you have stepped before the Nation, before the world, and telling them that you are taking this step into the 21st century and making a difference in terms of race relations. This is a year in which you are just really making us aware and bringing these things out to us. And I commend you for that.

**The President.** Well, thank you. I think part of the symbolism yesterday was that—thank you very much. I think yesterday, part of the importance of the symbolism was that political leaders closed the doors and stood in the doors in the fifties and sixties and kept people out of the doors. And apparently, that

idea to open the door came from the students at Central High themselves. It was a great, wonderful idea, and I was glad to be a part of it.

**Q.** Mr. President—first of all, to the affiliates of 93 stations around the country on the Tom Joyner Morning Show, as you can tell, we are running long. We're going to go right through the break. We want you to hang with us.

Mr. President, you said that what happened 40 years ago really developed your idea of what race relations in this country should be about. At 11 years old, you were thinking race relations?

**The President.** Well, it was discussed in my home because my grandparents were interested in it. That's what I said yesterday. So I had a chance to think about it earlier just because my grandfather expressed himself very strongly about it. He had once been a grocer and had a lot of black customers, and he knew a lot about black people as human beings and about the troubles they were facing and the problems in their lives and the potential they had. He thought it was wrong.

My grandmother was a nurse and she had a lot more contact with black people in the fifties than most white people did, and she thought it was wrong. And they just had a big impact on me, and they talked about it a lot. And even though my grandfather died in 1957, and everybody was talking about this happening in the 2 years coming up to that, I still remember as a little boy, 9, 10 years old, sitting around the table, having him walk through this with me and telling me that this was something that had to be done.

**Q.** Mr. President, Sybil asked you a moment ago about the symbolism of yesterday. I want to ask you about the substance, if I can. As you know, the two issues that are facing this country, certainly facing black America, with regard to education as we talk about this incident 40 years ago are the issue of school vouchers and this whole issue of resegregation of schools. You know, the NAACP was even considering earlier this summer reassessing their position on school integration. What are your thoughts specifically on how the issue of school vouchers and the issue of school integration are impacting

the African-American community? Where do you come down on that debate on those issues?

**The President.** Well, let me say, first of all, school vouchers—that is, giving people money that used to go to the school district that they can then use and spend in the school district or they can use it to defray the cost of tuition to private schools—school vouchers are the most extreme version of more school choice for parents and students. I have supported for years and years giving students and parents more choice for the public schools their kids attend and also the national charter school movement which allows groups of teachers and parents to organize schools on their own and be more loosely affiliated with public school districts and to meet the special needs of the community, and then they can have a lot of freedom from the rules and regulations of the school districts and the State as long as they meet high standards.

I support the school uniform movement which a lot of private schools have and which have made a big difference in a lot of school districts. The reason I have opposed school vouchers is that I think if you look at the facts, it's a relatively small financial contribution if you give somebody, for example, what the Federal Government gives to a school district, but if you take it away, you can have a big adverse impact on the school districts without helping any individual children very much.

Now, I will say this. I believe that sooner or later there will be a lot of people who will try going beyond Milwaukee and, I think, Cleveland unless we can prove that the public schools can work for children again. But I think, from my point of view, particularly with the Federal dollars, I simply don't believe that we should be diverting resources when our schools have been relatively underfunded on the whole. Instead, we ought to be concentrating on making them excellent.

On the other hand, there ought to be some competition there. The parents ought to have some say, which is why I think they ought to have more choice over the schools their kids attend, and they ought to have the right to participate in new schools that are outside

a lot of the bureaucratic rules that burden school districts.

On the resegregation, I think that my own view is that we ought to continue to try to have integrated schools. We ought to recognize that segregated neighborhoods and different patterns in who has children of school age in various places have led to a resegregation of a lot of our schools. We still ought to try to integrate these neighborhoods and mix them not only racially but economically. We still ought to have, where reasonable, transportation plans that work and aren't too burdensome for the kids. But we shouldn't use the fact that a school is not especially integrated at this moment as an excuse not to give those kids an excellent education and do the very best we can.

**Q.** Ten years ago, Mr. President, there was a 30-year celebration for the Little Rock Nine that you helped organize when you were Governor here in the State of Arkansas. It was a lot smaller celebration than the one we had this week, huh?

**The President.** It was a lot smaller. I think they enjoyed it, but some of them—I'm not sure, you'd have to ask them—but I think there were a couple that hadn't been back to Arkansas very much before then. But everybody gathered. I wanted them to be able to come to the Governor's Mansion because it was the symbol of opposition to their efforts, and it was the place where a lot of the plotting was done to keep them out of school. I thought it would be a good thing if they came into the house that had once shut them out.

**Q.** If you were one of them back then, do you think you could have had the courage to do what they did, in all that adversity?

**The President.** I don't know. Boy, I'd like to think I would have. I think we all would like to think we would have. But I think, to be honest, none of us can know. You don't know until you're in a situation like that. I wish I could say yes because I certainly would like to have been a part of it, and I can tell you this: I'm glad they did. I'm certainly glad they did.

**Q.** I'll tell you, the President—smooth, ain't he? Pretty smooth.

**Q.** And you know, Mr. President, I think your grandfather would be very proud of you

for what you have done in terms of stepping forward not only yesterday but, as I said before, with taking people and making us take stock of ourselves and our relationships with others, people that don't look like us. And you've done that certainly in your Cabinet and on your staff of people who look like a lot of us that listen to the Tom Joyner Morning Show as African-Americans.

**Q.** Thank you, sir. And we're all FOB's.

**Q.** Yes, we are.

**Q.** We're FOB's.

**The President.** Thanks. [Laughter]

### **Chelsea**

**Q.** So how is Chelsea doing in school? Has she called for money?

**The President.** Well, not for money yet. We've talked to her a couple of times, and she's having a good time.

**Q.** Well, tell her if she needs some campus fashion, Ms. Dupree has got some cousins who can hook her up. [Laughter]

**Q.** Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you for being a guest on the show, and thank you for being a part of all the celebration here for the 40th anniversary of the Little Rock Nine. Thank you, sir.

**The President.** Thank you. Goodbye, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 8:45 a.m. The President spoke from a private residence to the interviewers in the Clinton Ballroom of the Excelsior Hotel in Little Rock. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

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## **Digest of Other White House Announcements**

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The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

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### **September 20**

In the afternoon, the President and Hillary Clinton traveled from Palo Alto, CA, to San Francisco, CA. In the evening, they returned to Washington, DC, arriving after midnight.

### **September 21**

In the afternoon, the President and Hillary Clinton traveled to New York, NY. In the evening, they attended a reception for the 52d Session of the U.N. General Assembly in the Starlight Room of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

### **September 22**

In the afternoon, the President met with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan in the 12th Floor Conference Room at the United Nations. Later, he met with Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral of India in Room 35 H at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

In the evening, the President and Hillary Clinton attended a performance of "Carmen" at the Metropolitan Opera House. Later, they returned to Washington, DC, arriving after midnight.

The President announced the nomination of former Governor Richard Frank Celeste of Ohio to be Ambassador to India.

### **September 23**

The President announced his intention to nominate Stanford G. Ross to serve as a member of the Social Security Advisory Board. Upon his confirmation as a member by the Senate, the President intends to designate Mr. Ross as Chair of the Board.

The President declared a major disaster in New Jersey and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding August 20-21.

### **September 24**

In the morning, the President traveled to Pittsburgh, PA, and in the afternoon, he traveled to Little Rock, AR.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph B. Dial to be a member of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Barbara Holum to be a member of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Shaun E. Donnelly to be Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Maldives.